

**EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Priority Area on Maritime Safety and Security “PA Safe” Flagship Project to lay the groundwork for developing a plan to reduce the number of accidents in fisheries**

**Visits to Latvia and Lithuania 19<sup>th</sup> -21<sup>st</sup> August 2013**

**Latvia 19<sup>th</sup> August 2013**

During the visit, a recurring theme for Latvia emerged: Is this solely an issue of improving health and safety and the reporting of accidents? Or is it also how to enhance recruitment into the sector?

The main commercial species under EU quotas caught by Latvia in the Baltic are sprat (34.583 t.), herring (18.956 t.) (Main Basin and Gulf of Riga), salmon (14.335 pieces) (SDs 22-31) and cod (5.983 t.) (SDs 25-32. These figures are for catches in 2013.

At the BSRAC meeting in February 2013, it was reported that 86 vessels fish in the Baltic Sea and Gulf of Riga – beyond the coastal waters. They are ageing vessels 30 y+. They are trawlers fishing mainly for sprat, herring, cod. There are also bottom set gill nets for cod, flounder and salmon. There is also fishing for non-quota species: flounder, turbot, sea trout, eelpout, vimba (a perch-like fish).

There is also the coastal fishery which occupies the bulk of the fleet (some 600 boats) up to a depth of 20 metres. Quotas for coastal fishermen are set by law giving a fixed % of total catches. Stationary gears are used: different kinds of nets and traps and seines for herring fishery. The coastal fishery is mostly for herring, flounder, vimba, eelpout, garfish and salmon.

The Latvian authorities reported the following Baltic fleet information to the BSRAC:

Year	Length of vessels - 0-8	Length of vessels - 8-12	Length of vessels - 12-15	Length of vessels - 15 and up	Total Number of vessels
2013	560	67	1	68	696

**Active Fishermen/women: not provided**

Inland fisheries	Coastal fisheries	Harvest sector	Total
			0

We were met by Capt. Aleksandrs Pavlovičs, Head of Marine Accident Investigation Department, Transport Accident and Incident Investigation Bureau (TAIIB).

By way of introduction, Aleksandrs Pavlovičs reiterated what was already reported: that the TAIIB investigates accidents which involve fishing vessels over 15 metres and in some

cases, where necessary, any fishing vessel or boat. The investigation of accidents relates to accidents resulting from normal maritime operations. Incidents involving alcohol are not investigated. He informed that the State Labour Inspectorate investigates accidents on vessels below 15 metres, but is not doing this in a routine way [*A letter was written to the SLI on 280813 for more information, but nothing has been forthcoming*].

Accompanying us on the visit to the port of Skulte was the President of the Latvian Fisheries Association, Inarijs Voits. This is an important job, he underlined, as he represents all Latvian fishermen. In his overall introduction to the sector he highlighted how much fleet reduction has taken place due to decommissioning and scrapping of vessels [most recently reported in an article by Eurofish 2010]. Fishing is no longer a popular profession, compared to 20 years ago, when the fleet (including the long distance fleet) was bigger and catches were larger. This, he underlined, was the key factor facing the sector.

He highlighted the good dialogue he has with the fishermen and on their behalf in dealing with the relevant authorities. This includes health and safety issues. Accidents in the sector are investigated by the TAIIB, and the Latvian Fisheries Association receives a copy of the accident reports. The organisation also keeps information on the relevant qualifications of the captain and crew. On the basis of the information gathered, it is possible to make recommendations for the future. He reported that the figures are low with respect to occupational accidents, but he did not give any figures.

He highlighted the rules concerning the number of crew members on board. Latvian authorities prescribe a minimum number of crew members on board fishing vessels. On gill netters the minimum is three. On small trawlers sailing between two ports in the Gulf of Riga the minimum number is three. In other waters [*? the central Baltic?*] the minimum is five. There is no direct link made between this and enhanced safety. The requirement was compared to the Danish sector where there are many one-man vessels, and this was seen as having implications for safety.

The port of Skulte is a typical port on the Gulf of Riga. There we were met by Janis Laguns, Fisheries Department, Ministry of Agriculture, and the crew of the vessel Varita.

Skulte has good facilities for sorting, grading and storing the catch, as well as refrigerators and freezers and ice-making facilities. A visit was made to the ice making and sorting/refrigerating/storage installation on shore. The aim is to build a freezing plant next door in a warehouse in need of renovation. All facilities have been built and developed with EU, national and fisheries organization money: thus a shared venture and interest in this port.

There is a good system in operation to supply fresh fish to the processing companies - cooperation based on direct agreements to supply specific quantities. This maintained regular contacts between the fishing companies and the processors, bypassing the need for auctions. A different system operates for frozen fish whereby the vessels can supply bigger volumes.

Inarijs Voits highlighted the successful management of the Gulf of Riga with national regulations in terms of the number of fishing days and the engine size of the vessel (a specific regulation limits the engine power of vessels to a maximum of 300 KW), as well as a specific closed season for fishing herring in the Gulf. These stricter management rules come on top of EU fisheries management requirements.

A combination of quotas and days at sea was reported to be an efficient system working in the Gulf of Riga. The use of quotas is operating well and has reduced any lack of or mis-reporting of fish.

A visit was made to a typical steel trawler Varita, 25 metres long and built in 1983 and subsequently refitted. The vessel is in a good state of repair, operating in the Gulf of Riga fishing for herring and sprat. This type of vessel is typically carrying out day trips in the Latvian zone of the Gulf of Riga, leaving early morning and returning each evening during the fishing season. Fish is hauled in typically with one haul. The fish are stored in newly purchased ½ tonne containers and iced. It is catching pelagic fish for human consumption; landing fish for fish meal is not allowed, because trawling and landing fish for fishmeal in the Gulf of Riga is forbidden by national legislation.

The vessel supplies fish direct to the freezer warehouse in the harbour. The catch is landed directly by the crane and lifting facilities onboard the vessel. It was seen as a positive factor that these new containers had been purchased, and that there were good, modern onshore facilities.

The captain of the vessel Varita highlighted the various costs of running the vessel: port costs, taxes, salaries etc. Any surplus is invested in new equipment on the trawler.

The captain has owned the vessel for the past 6 years. He explained that there are four men on board (including himself) – the minimum legal requirement being three. He informed that the entire crew had up-to-date health certificates, renewed annually.

On board, there was an indication of good safety practices, with essential safety equipment such as:

- Fire-fighting equipment
- Visible and easily accessible life vests
- Life raft (incl. the date of inspection)
- Modern technical navigation equipment
- GMDSS radio equipment

There were also different leaflets and posters on board with basic safety guidance and instructions - both text and illustrations (e.g. from [osha.europa.eu](http://osha.europa.eu))

The captain informed that every time a new crew member came onboard, as well as every three months, there is obligatory refresher training for all the crew in safety practices onboard. Confirmation of attendance of this is signed by the crew taking part. Every four years, all crew undergo a compulsory refresher course in safety training. The company pays for the courses. If the captain observes anything that is not in accordance with work safety practices, he takes note of it and brings it up and discusses it when the vessel comes into harbour. Every year there is an annual health check for the crew. This was highlighted as good practice with respect to health and safety.

The captain maintains a detailed logbook with dates and time of events; the record includes all navigational details relating to each trip as well as incidents related to safety and accidents. The captain was open and informative about the work on board and the safety practices applied. If an accident happens, it is possible to get help by means of radio communication to the rescue authorities onshore.

So there was generally a positive picture of the fishery and related activities from this harbour, where there are three such vessels operating. A similar practice/pattern applies in other harbours nearby.

Nevertheless, the long-term viability of the sector was highlighted by the fact that it is difficult to recruit young fishermen to the fishery. The average of vessels is increasing, as is the age of the fishermen. This is the key challenge: no one wants to work in the sector any more.

We did not have the occasion to see any small-scale vessels (they have a small percentage - approx. 3% of the Baltic commercial catches). We do not have information health and safety in this sector.

### **Meeting with representatives/teachers from the Latvian Maritime Academy and school Inarijs Voits and Aleksandrs Pavlovičs from TAIIB**

In Latvia it was informed that there is no dedicated education for future fishermen. But the education offered at the Academy and school follows the obligations of the STCW-F Convention. A basic course in technical means of navigation is given as part of the overall maritime education. This includes troubleshooting and learning how to make the equipment operate safely. Safety is nevertheless a very important element in this education. It is not clear exactly how much safety training is given on that course.

Inarijs Voits highlighted the lack of specialised courses and education for fishermen. Fishermen now only finish their education with diplomas. It was his opinion that in the past there was generally a better education for the fishers and more difficult questions to answer. From his own experience, the minimum requirement was four years at a maritime college in Latvia and 6 years at the Saint Petersburg Higher Marine School. Work experience was greater, for example with special training and months spent at sea onboard vessels. Education is now offered at the Maritime Academy of Latvia in Riga and at the Maritime College in Liepāja. He made no link between this development in the education and training and the number or occurrence of accidents or any implications with safety on board.

They went on to explain that the fishing sector is facing a dilemma. It is easy to get students on the navigation courses, but it is not possible to attract young people into the fishing sector. It is difficult for prospective fishermen to get work experience on board fishing vessels because vessel owners/captains are not interested in having them. It is also difficult to attract fishermen into the sector because salary is not competitive.

Aleksandrs Pavlovičs commented on the reporting practices: only the major accidents are reported on. This raises the questions: What is an accident? What qualifies as a major accident? How serious is an accident for it to be reported? He called for a clear definition of an accident at sea and a work-related accident/incident. It was important to make a serious distinction between serious, professionally related accidents and casualties and occupational accidents. Clear definitions are important.

It was informed that in the merchant fleet, the reporting of accidents is done in a more detailed way. So improved reporting emerged as a recommendation from the discussions. Aleksandrs Pavlovičs referred to cooperation with the European Maritime Safety Authority which offers a one-week course on the methodology for collecting data and information on accidents. This is on the basis of IMO 884 Resolution (Amendments to the code for the investigation of marine casualties and incidents): what is referred to as the human factor.

We recalled that the captain on board the vessel Varita kept a very detailed log of everything that happened on board, including accidents. The log book has the potential to be a very useful tool.

The Danish representative informed of and distributed a leaflet issued by the Danish Maritime Accident Investigation Board (DMAIB): Investigations of marine accidents. The DMAIB is part of a European cooperation on the reporting of accidents. On the back page of the leaflet is a list of what can result from an accident. Accidents of this nature have to be reported to the DMAIB. This led to discussion on the definition of accidents. The question asked was whether this list was comprehensive enough.

Reference was also made to Directive 2009/18/EC establishing the fundamental principles governing the investigation of accidents in the maritime transport sector entered into force on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2011. A Commission COSS 29 meeting took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2013 under DG MOVE to take stock of the implementation of the directive and experience to date. Aleksandrs Pavlovičs informed that this meeting highlighted that the number of accidents notified has decreased. This may suggest that marine incidents overall (including near-misses) are being under reported. According to the meeting report, figures from the last two years suggest that approximately 7.000 accidents could have been notified. It was agreed that this is something that can be examined and discussed in more detail in order to get a better overview.

Also highlighted was work on accident prevention and preventative measures in general. Every company has to have in place a near-miss reporting system. It was pointed out that Finland, Sweden and Norway have a common system.

With respect to the culture of safety and prevention and preventative initiatives it was asked whether we can draw from the IMO and International Safety Management Code (ISM) Article 9 - and near-miss reporting (exchange of knowledge between vessels): SMS (safe management system) – documentation relating to safety onboard.

The vessel Varita



Rescue vests on board



## **Concluding comments and recommendations from the Latvian representatives:**

Extending the culture of safety in the fisheries sector: is there knowledge to be gained on this from the IMO website and from information databases?

Shipowners trusted the old education system which applied in pre-accession times, when there was specialised fisheries education for prospective fishermen. Do we need to re-visit the courses offered?

Offer or provide more practical work experience periods on board fishing vessels for trainees and young students.

How to overcome the overall dilemma for the sector where there are ageing vessels, no interest amongst young people in entering the sector and no interest by shipowners in investing in new vessels. This issue does not directly relate to health and safety, but forms a depressing backdrop to the future longevity of the commercial fishing sector in the Baltic.

## **Documentation referred to**

Eurofish article on Latvia from 2010

<http://www.eurofishmagazine.com/magazine/317-em-2-2012>

European Agency for Health and Safety at Work

[www.osha.europa.eu](http://www.osha.europa.eu)

<https://osha.europa.eu/en/sector/fisheries>

From the Maritime Academy in Latvia the study programme for technical means of navigation Attached as pdf ./.

Leaflet from Danish Maritime Authority: Investigation Board: Investigations of marine accidents:

[http://www.dmaib.com/SiteCollectionDocuments/Folder%20om%20havarikommissionen/Broc\\_hurefolder%20ENG.pdf](http://www.dmaib.com/SiteCollectionDocuments/Folder%20om%20havarikommissionen/Broc_hurefolder%20ENG.pdf)

IMO Resolution A. 884 (21): amendments to the code for the investigation of marine casualties and incidents (Resolution A.849 (20))

[http://www.emsa.europa.eu/retro/Docs/marine\\_casualties/resolution\\_a884\\_21.pdf](http://www.emsa.europa.eu/retro/Docs/marine_casualties/resolution_a884_21.pdf)

The minutes from the COSS 29 meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2013

Attached as pdf ./.

Directive 2009/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 establishing the fundamental principles governing the investigation of accidents in the maritime transport sector and amending Council Directive 1999/35/EC and Directive 2002/59/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:131:0114:0127:EN:PDF>

Facts and figures on the Common Fisheries Policy

[http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/documentation/publications/pcp\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/documentation/publications/pcp_en.pdf)

## The people we met during the visit

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